

1           1. A method of tracking electronic content, the  
2 method comprising:  
3           producing a file that includes  
4           electronic content, and  
5           executable instructions that collect  
6 notification information and attempt to transmit the  
7 notification information to an address when triggered by an  
8 event, the executable instructions denying access to the  
9 electronic content until the notification information is  
10 transmitted successfully.

1           2. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable  
2 instructions further deny access until an access granting  
3 message is received in response to the successful  
4 transmission of notification information.

1           3. The method of claim 1, wherein the trigger event  
2 comprises an attempt to access the electronic content.

1           4. The method of claim 3, wherein an attempt to  
2 access the electronic content comprises an attempt to view,  
3 use, or list the electronic content.

1           5. The method of claim 3, wherein the trigger event  
2 comprises an attempt to access the electronic content on a  
3 computer that has not previously been used to access the  
4 electronic content.

1           6. The method of claim 3, wherein the trigger event  
2 comprises an attempt to access the electronic content by a  
3 user who has not previously accessed the electronic content.

1           7. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable  
2 instructions that collect notification information comprise  
3 instructions for querying a computer for notification  
4 information.

1           8. The method of claim 1, wherein the executable  
2 instructions that collect notification information comprise  
3 instructions for interactively collecting information from a  
4 user.

1           9. The method of claim 1, wherein the notification  
2 information comprises demographic information.

1           10. The method of claim 9, wherein demographic  
2 information comprises at least one of the following: a name,  
3 an e-mail address, and an organization identifier.

1           11. The method of claim 1, wherein the notification  
2 information comprises system information.

1           12. The method of claim 11, wherein system  
2 information comprises a network address.

1           13. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic  
2 content comprises compressed electronic content.

1           14. The method of claim 13, wherein the executable  
2 instructions comprise instructions that cause the electronic  
3 content to be decompressed after successfully transmitting  
4 the notification information.

1           15. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic  
2 content comprises encrypted electronic content.

1           16. The method of claim 15, wherein the executable  
2 instructions comprise instructions that cause the received  
3 electronic content to be decrypted after successfully  
4 transmitting the notification information.

1           17. The method of claim 1, wherein the electronic  
2 content comprises information included in at least one file  
3 of data, text, graphics, audio, video, or an executable  
4 program.

1           18. The method of claim 1, further comprising,  
2 transmitting the file via e-mail.

1           19. The method of claim 18, wherein transmitting  
2 the file via e-mail comprises transmitting the file as an e-  
3 mail attachment.

1           20. The method of claim 1, further comprising,  
2 determining the address.

1           21. The method of claim 20, wherein determining the  
2 address comprises interactively receiving an address from a  
3 user.

1           22. The method of claim 20, wherein determining the  
2 address comprises automatically identifying the address as  
3 the address of the user creating the file.

1           23. The method of claim 1, wherein the instructions  
2 that transmit notification information comprise instructions  
3 that dynamically determine how to transmit the notification  
4 information via an intermediate device.

1           24. The method of claim 23, wherein an intermediate  
2 device comprises at least one of the following: a proxy  
3 server and a firewall.

1           25. A method of tracking access to electronic  
2 content, the method comprising:  
3           encrypting electronic content;  
4           determining an address for receipt of notification  
5 information; and  
6           producing a file that includes  
7           the encrypted electronic content, and  
8           executable instructions that collect  
9 notification information and attempt to transmit the  
10 notification information to the determined address in  
11 response to an attempt to access the electronic content on a  
12 computer that has not previously accessed the electronic  
13 content, the notification instructions decrypting the  
14 encrypted electronic content after transmitting notification  
15 information successfully.

1           26. The method of claim 25, wherein decrypting the  
2 encrypted electronic content after transmitting notification  
3 information successfully comprises decrypting the electronic  
4 content after receiving an access granting message.

1           27. A method for tracking access to electronic  
2 content, the method comprising:  
3           receiving notification information from a recipient  
4 of a file including electronic content, the notification  
5 information being transmitted in response to an attempt to  
6 access the electronic content, the notification information  
7 including an identifier that identifies a user or computer  
8 system;

9           determining an address for receipt of the  
10 notification information; and  
11           transmitting the notification information to the  
12 determined address.

1           28. The method of claim 27, further comprising  
2 transmitting access granting messages.

1           29. The method of claim 27, further comprising  
2 verifying that the identifier that identifies a user  
3 or computer system included in the notification information  
4 corresponds to an authorized user of the software for  
5 producing the file.

1           30. The method of claim 27, further comprising  
2 updating information corresponding to the identifier  
3 that identifies a user or computer system included in the  
4 notification information.

1           31. The method of claim 30, wherein updating  
2 comprises computing a usage charge.

1           32. A computer-implemented method of regulating  
2 access to electronic content, the method comprising:  
3           collecting notification information in response to  
4 an attempt to access the electronic content;  
5           attempting to transmit the collected notification  
6 information to an address; and  
7           selectively granting access to the electronic  
8 content based on a result of the attempted transmission of  
9 the notification information.

1           33. The method of claim 32 in which access to the  
2 electronic content is granted if the attempted transmission  
3 is successful and access to the electronic content is denied  
4 if the attempted transmission is unsuccessful.

1           34. The method of claim 32 in which access to the  
2 electronic is granted if the attempted transmission results  
3 in receipt of an access granting message and access to the  
4 electronic content is denied if the attempted transmission  
5 does not result in receipt of an access granting message.

1           35. The method of claim 32 in which access to the  
2 electronic content is denied if no notification information  
3 is collected.

1           36. The method of claim 32 in which the electronic  
2 content is included in an attachment to an e-mail message.

1           37. The method of claim 36, in which the attempt to  
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises  
3 sending the notification information to an address  
4 associated with an originator of the e-mail message.

1           38. The method of claim 36 in which the attempt to  
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises  
3 sending the notification information to an address other  
4 than an address associated with an originator of the e-mail  
5 message.

1           39. The method of claim 38 in which the other  
2 address is designated by the originator of the e-mail  
3 message.

1           40. The method of claim 32 further comprising,  
2 prior to the collection of notification information,  
3 detecting that a user of a computer system is attempting to  
4 access electronic content embedded in an e-mail attachment.

1           41. The method of claim 32 further comprising  
2 providing subsequent access to the electronic content,  
3 without re-collecting or re-transmitting notification  
4 information, if the notification information already has  
5 been collected and transmitted successfully.

1           42. The method of claim 32 further comprising  
2 deactivating the collection and transmission of notification  
3 information after the notification information has been  
4 collected and transmitted successfully.

1           43. The method of claim 42 further comprising  
2 re-activating the collection and transmission of  
3 notification information if the electronic content is  
4 forwarded to another computer or another user.

1           44. The method of claim 32 in which the attempt to  
2 transmit the collected notification information comprises  
3 sending the notification information to an intermediate  
4 server that routes the notification information to the  
5 address.

1           45. A method of tracking access to electronic  
2 content, the method comprising:  
3           creating a file that includes electronic content and  
4 causes access to the electronic content to be denied until  
5 notification information has been successfully transmitted;

6           transmitting the file to a set of addresses that  
7 includes at least one address; and  
8           receiving notification information.

1           46. The method of claim 45, wherein transmitting  
2 the file comprises transmitting the file by e-mail.

1           47. The method of claim 45, wherein receiving  
2 notification information comprises receiving notification  
3 information collected from an address other than an address  
4 in the set of addresses.

1           48. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises receiving a password that protects the  
3 electronic contents.

1           49. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises receiving identification of the electronic  
3 content for inclusion in the file.

1           50. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises compressing the electronic content.

1           51. The method of claim 50, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises including information in the file needed to  
3 decompress of the compressed electronic content.

1           52. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises encrypting the electronic content.

1           53. The method of claim 52, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises including information in the file needed to  
3 decrypt the encrypted electronic content.



1           54. The method of claim 52, wherein encrypting the  
2 electronic content comprises encrypting the electronic  
3 content using a password as encryption key.

1           55. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises determining an address that receives the  
3 notification information.

1           56. The method of claim 45, wherein creating the  
2 file comprises  
3           receiving a password that protects the electronic  
4 contents;  
5           receiving identification of the electronic contents  
6 for inclusion in the file;  
7           compressing the electronic contents;  
8           encrypting the electronic contents according to the  
9 received password; and  
10          determining an address that receives the  
11 notification information.

1           57. A computer-implemented method of regulating  
2 access to e-mail, the method comprising:  
3           detecting an attempt by a message recipient to  
4 access received e-mail;  
5           attempting to collect notification information from  
6 the recipient;  
7           selectively granting access to the e-mail based on a  
8 result of the attempt to collect notification information.

1           58. The method of claim 57 in which access to the  
2 e-mail is granted if the attempted collection is successful  
3 and access to the e-mail is denied if the attempted  
4 collection is unsuccessful.

1           59. The method of claim 57 further comprising, if  
2 the attempt to collect notification information is  
3 successful, selectively granting access to the e-mail based  
4 on the content of the collected notification information.

1           60. The method of claim 57 further comprising, if  
2 the attempt to collect notification information is  
3 successful:  
4           attempting to transmit the collected notification  
5 information; and  
6           selectively granting access to the e-mail based on a  
7 result of the transmission attempt.

1           61. The method of claim 57 further comprising  
2 notifying an originator of the e-mail that access to the  
3 e-mail has been granted to the message recipient.

1           62. A computer program, disposed on a computer  
2 readable medium, for tracking electronic content, the  
3 computer program including computer program instructions for  
4 causing a computer to:  
5           produce a file that includes  
6           electronic content, and  
7           executable instructions that collect  
8 notification information and attempt to transmit the  
9 notification information to an address when triggered by an  
10 event, the executable instructions denying access to the  
11 electronic content until the notification information is  
12 transmitted successfully.

1           63. The computer program of claim 62, wherein the  
2 executable instructions further deny access until an access

3 granting message is received in response to the successful  
4 transmission of notification information.

1           64. The computer program of claim 62, wherein the  
2 trigger event comprises an attempt to access the electronic  
3 content.

1           65. The computer program of claim 62, wherein the  
2 executable instructions that transmit notification  
3 information comprise instructions that dynamically determine  
4 how to transmit the notification information via an  
5 intermediate device.

1           66. A computer program, disposed on a computer  
2 readable medium, for regulating access to electronic  
3 content, the computer program including instructions for  
4 causing a processor to:  
5           collect notification information in response to an  
6 attempt to access the electronic content;  
7           attempt to transmit the collected notification  
8 information to an address; and  
9           selectively grant access to the electronic content  
10 based on a result of the attempted transmission of the  
11 notification information.

1           67. The computer program of claim 66 in which  
2 access to the electronic content is granted if the attempted  
3 transmission is successful and access to the electronic  
4 content is denied if the attempted transmission is  
5 unsuccessful.

1           68. The computer program of claim 66 in which  
2 access to the electronic content is granted if the attempted

3 transmission results in receipt of an access granting  
4 message and access to the electronic content is denied if  
5 the attempted transmission does not result in receipt of an  
6 access granting message.

1           69. The computer program of claim 66 in which  
2 access to the electronic content is denied if no  
3 notification information is collected.

1           70. The computer program of claim 66 in which the  
2 electronic content is included in an attachment to an e-mail  
3 message.

1           71. The computer program of claim 66, in which the  
2 attempt to transmit the collected notification information  
3 comprises sending the notification information to an address  
4 associated with an originator of the e-mail message.

1           72. The computer program of claim 66 in which the  
2 attempt to transmit the collected notification information  
3 comprises sending the notification information to an address  
4 other than an address associated with an originator of the  
5 e-mail message.

1           73. The computer program of claim 66 in which the  
2 attempt to transmit the collected notification information  
3 comprises sending the notification information to an  
4 intermediate server that routes the notification information  
5 to the address.